

WHEN THE FORGIVEN SIN

PSALM 40

Introduction:

The title does not sound right—“When the forgiven sin?” Actually when a person experiences the uplifting, life-changing forgiveness of the Lord, they never intend to sin again. They feel confident in their hearts that they are through with sin. But that is not the way life is. The forgiven do sin.

This Psalm of David is a reminder of this painful reality. Sin can break out in shameful, destructive ways in the forgiven life. It had in David’s life. The psalm offers not even a hint of the exact circumstance in which this happened; it simply records how David responded when it did happen. If sin breaks out in your life, or worse, it has broken out in your life, this is the psalm for you.

A careful reading of the psalm clearly reveals a serious division in the psalm. The first half of the psalm is celebrative with joy as it looks back to an unforgettable display of the goodness of God. It is the memory of a great deliverance and a new song. It is a memory of blessings from a gracious God that could not be counted.

But the tone of the psalm makes a dramatic turn in verse eleven. It is so dramatic that modern critics have suggested that the compiler of the psalms actually put two psalms together that do not go together. But when a forgiven sinner reads this psalm, she knows painfully well that they do belong together, and thanks God for the hope that they give.

I. WHEN THE FORGIVEN SIN, REFRESH YOUR MEMORY OF PAST MERCIES. (V. 1-10)

1. Saving mercy came in response to believing prayer (v. 1).
2. Saving mercy came with transforming power (v. 2-3)
3. Saving mercy came with innumerable blessings (v. 4-5)
4. Saving mercy provided a needed change (v. 6-8)
5. Saving mercy opened the life to the joy of witness (v. 9-10)

II. WHEN THE FORGIVEN SIN, RENEW YOUR CONFIDENCE IN PRESENT MERCIES.

1. God's mercies are greater than the number of your sins (v. 11-12)
2. God's mercies are more powerful than the power of your sins (v. 13-15)

The English expositor who wrote the commentary on Psalms in the Barclay Daily Bible Study Series offers an interesting possibility on this passage. He

suggests that the enemies described in this verse may well be for most of us temptations, and inner demons with which we struggle. They are the ones that mock our weakness and declare that we have no hope. I know that this has been true in my sinful heart. I have been spared the mocking enemies who flaunted my weaknesses and sought my destruction, but I have not been spared the inner accusations of the enemy and the horrible pull of my own weakness toward sin. But thanks be to God that the power of His mercy is greater than the power of my sin and all that attends my sin. My present sin does not cancel the power of His mercy!

3. God's mercies are new to those seek them (v. 16-17)

When the forgiven sin, they need to return to the source of mercy with urgency and with confidence. The Lord of the covenant is full of mercy and ready to forgive again, to renew the joy of salvation in the freshly defiled heart.